

May 29, 2000

Mr. Rocky Cofer, Superintendent
North Dakota School for the Deaf
1401 College Drive
Devils Lake, ND 58301

Dear Mr. Cofer:

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Office of Special Education conducted a Verification Review for the North Dakota School for the Deaf on March 15 – 16, 2000 for the purpose of assessing compliance in the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and assisting NDSD in developing strategies to improve results for children with disabilities. The IDEA Amendments of 1997 focus on “access to services” as well as “improving results for children and youth with disabilities. In the same way, the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process implemented by NDDPI is designed to focus Federal, State and local resources on improved results for children with disabilities and their families through a working partnership among NDDPI, the North Dakota School for the Deaf, parents and stakeholders.

In conducting its review of the North Dakota School for the Deaf, NDDPI applied the standards set forth in the IDEA 97 statute and Part B regulations (34 CFR Part 300), as they were in effect at the time of the review. On March 12, 1999, the United States Department of Education published the final Part B regulations that took effect on May 11, 1999. In planning and implementing improvement strategies to address the findings in this report, the North Dakota School for the Deaf should ensure that all improvement strategies are consistent with the new final regulations.

The enclosed report addresses strengths noted during the review, areas that require corrective action because they represent noncompliance with the requirements of the IDEA, and suggestions for improvements that will lead to best practice. Enclosed you will find an Executive Summary of the Report, an Introduction including background information, and a description of issues and findings. NDDPI will work with you to develop corrective actions and improvement strategies to ensure improved results for children with disabilities.

Thank you for the assistance and cooperation provided by the North Dakota School for the Deaf staff and Collaborative Review Steering Committee members during our review. Throughout the course of the review, you and your staff were responsive to requests for information and assistance from NDDPI personnel.

Thank you for the continued efforts toward the goal of achieving better results for children and youth with disabilities in North Dakota. Since the enactment of IDEA and its predecessor, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, one of the basic goals of the law, ensuring that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), has largely been achieved. Today, families can have positive visions for their children's future.

While schools have made great progress, significant challenges remain. Now that children with disabilities are receiving services, the critical issue is to place greater emphasis on attaining better results. To that end, we look forward to working with the North Dakota School for the Deaf in partnership to continue to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Rutten, ND Director of Special Education
Department of Public Instruction

Enclosure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (NDSB)

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Collaborative Review and Verification Review) of the North Dakota Continuous Improvement Monitoring of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, for the North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDSB) during the 1998 – 1999 and 1999 – 2000 school years. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for children with disabilities and their families through enhanced partnerships between the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), the NDSB, parents and stakeholders. The Collaborative Review phase of the monitoring process included the completion of a Self-Assessment under the direction of a local Steering Committee that provided further comments on the information. The Verification Review phase included interviews with local program and school administrators, service providers, teachers, and targeted reviews of children's records. Information obtained from these data sources was shared in a meeting attended by staff from the North Dakota School for the Deaf Collaborative Review Steering Committee and staff from the ND Department of Public Instruction.

This report contains a detailed description of the process utilized to collect data, and to determine strengths, areas of noncompliance with IDEA, and suggestions for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities Part B of IDEA

Strengths

The NDDPI Verification Review team identified the following strengths:

- Transition planning is quite strong. There is a high level of student participation and student advocacy in the IEP planning process.
- Ongoing involvement of school improvement activities, continuous improvement planning, and ongoing training activities for personnel.
- Positive feedback from parents and families indicating satisfaction with school services and level of involvement.
- Efficient and effective overall record keeping system is maintained.
- Strong, effective, and supportive superintendent and school psychologist.
- A good working relationship between the Devil's Lake public school system, Lake Region Special Services, and educators from the School for the Deaf.

Areas of Noncompliance

The NDDPI Verification Review team identified the following areas of noncompliance:

- Incomplete documentation on evaluation planning forms and Integrated Written Assessment Report (IWAR) (i.e., parent input and participation).
- Lack of full IEP Team membership and participation in the IEP process.
- Annual goals developed within the IEP process are not necessarily attainable within one year's time.
- Characteristics of services information does not include documentation of discussion of where the goals and short-term objectives can most appropriately be met and how this leads to inclusion in the general education curriculum.
- Behavioral interventions are not always in place when concerns are noted in the Present Levels of Educational Performance.
- Extended school year services are not consistently included in the IEP process.
- Least Restrictive Environment inadequately addressed in the IEP Process (i.e., potential harmful effect, continuum of available services).
- Insufficient support in public school settings to ensure placement opportunities for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (NDSB) MONITORING REPORT
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INTRODUCTION

The North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDSB) Self-Assessment (November 1999) report contains information describing the school, its mission and role in collaborating with school districts throughout ND including the Devil's Lake community and surrounding area; and the structure of the NDSB residential program and services. The NDSB is a state-funded school that provides services for students from school districts across the state of ND. NDSB was established in 1890 in Devils Lake, ND and has a rich history of providing a quality education to student with hearing impairments in ND.

The North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDSB) Collaborative Review Steering Committee reports strong support provided to the school by families. Communication between teachers, parents and administrators is generally positive and effectively maintained.

NDSB has demonstrated a commitment and high level of involvement in the School Improvement Process over a period of time. Special education issues have been included in school improvement activities, resulting in significant participation by NDSB personnel. A comprehensive and sound structure for improvement of services is already in place in the NDSB. Many issues identified in the Self-Assessment as areas for improvement have already been included in improvement plans that are being implemented within the school.

Administrative Structures and Children Served: NDSB has 14 certified teachers and a variety of support staff (interpreters, teacher aides, dorm counselors, librarian, school nurse, school psychologist, audiologist, house parent, etc.) to provide programming for students at NDSB.

At the present time, NDSB has an enrollment of 42 students. Students range in age from 3 – 21 years of age. Twenty-four students reside in the dorms and 17 attend school during the day and participate in additional after school activities. Enrollment has remained relatively stable over the past 14 years. Approximately 25% of students identified as deaf or hard of hearing in ND (December 1, 1999 Child Count) attend the NDSB. The NDSB also provides Outreach Services to local school districts who serve students with hearing impairments in their home school districts. A center-based preschool for children with hearing impairments implements integration of nondisabled children to allow opportunities for interaction and peer modeling.

Verification Review and Data Collection: The NDSB began the Collaborative Review process in February 1999. The NDSB Self-Assessment report was submitted to NDDPI in February 2000. The Self-Assessment included data gathered by student record review, survey information collected as part of the school improvement process, and stakeholder surveys conducted as part of the self-assessment process in 1999.

NDDPI visited the NDSB on March 15 – 16, 2000, for the purpose of collecting data to verify information provided through the Collaborative Review process, including new requirements under the IDEA Amendments of 1997. NDDPI staff members met with the NDSB Collaborative Review Steering Committee to discuss the Self-Assessment and develop an agenda for the Verification Review. NDDPI visited 3 of the 4 public school and community programs that provide services to students from NDSB. Student record reviews, including Individualized

Education Program plans (IEPs) and Integrated Written Assessment Reports (IWARs), were conducted at the NDSD. Interviews were conducted with seven NDSD staff members responsible for developing and implementing IEPs, four public school staff members who teach children with disabilities in their classrooms, a Lake Region Special Education inclusion consultant, two public school administrators, the NDSD school psychologist and the NDSD Parent/Infant Outreach Coordinator. Preliminary results and findings were presented to the NDSD Steering Committee in a summary meeting at the end of the Verification Review visit.

Improvement Planning: In response to this report, the NDSD will develop an action plan including specific Improvement Strategies addressing areas identified as noncompliant, within 60 days of receipt of this report. The NDDPI special education regional coordinator assigned to the NDSD will serve, as needed, as a resource for improvement planning purposes, and will respond in writing to indicate approval of Improvement Strategies submitted by the NDSD.

I. ZERO REJECT

All children with disabilities must be provided with a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

NDDPI's 1994 monitoring report did not identify any finding of noncompliance in this area. Furthermore, NDSD was commended for its recognition of the need to better serve individuals with hearing impairments and deafness, regardless of their location and the opportunities available for staff to develop professional skills, as well as, provide inservice training as one means of reaching that goal. The NDSD Self-Assessment report did not identify any concerns regarding Child Find. During the interviews that NDDPI conducted as part of the Verification Review, respondents were asked if there were any concerns with regard to child identification.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strengths and suggestion for improvement.

STRENGTHS

The NDSD supports a Parent/Infant Outreach program for early intervention. This program provides specialized instruction to children and their families in their homes.

The NDSD also serves as an Outreach/Resource Center to support children and youth with hearing impairments. NDSD Outreach staff provides assessment, evaluation and consultation services to local school districts serving students with hearing impairments.

NDSD has identified a Professional Development Coordinator to determine the personnel development needs (including students, parents and staff). These training needs are addressed through the Family Learning Vacation, summer camp opportunities, workshops, and inservice training opportunities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

NDDPI would strongly encourage the NDSD Outreach Program to continue its efforts with local school districts and its efforts of staff skill development at the local level.

II. NONDISCRIMINATORY EVALUATION

Any child with a suspected disability must receive a full, individualized evaluation, which meets specific standards, and includes information from a variety of sources.

Information included in the NDSD Self-Assessment report indicated no areas of concern regarding the required components of the evaluation process. The NDSD superintendent has assured NDDPI that state recommended *Guidelines: Evaluation Process (8/1/99)* have been adopted by the NDSD and are being used by personnel at NDSD. Local training was provided to NDSD personnel in the fall of 1999 on the reauthorization of IDEA, including changes in the evaluation process.

During interviews NDDPI conducted as part of the Verification Review, respondents were asked to "Describe the evaluation process." Further probes included questions regarding specific components of the evaluation process and the consideration of auditory training and speech development for students served by NDSD. Copies of evaluation plans and reports were also reviewed during the student record review process. During interviews with special education staff members, the evaluation process, including the use of the Assessment Plan and completion of the IWAR, was appropriately described in detail. Student record reviews did verify this finding.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strengths and suggestions for improvement.

STRENGTHS

NDDPI monitors noted a clear understanding of the evaluation process as discussed by NDSD staff. It was apparent that a clear link was made between student needs identified through the evaluation process to the IEP. During on-site interviews, NDSD staff noted improvement in their own completion of the components of the IWAR.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

During interviews, it was noted that no students with additional specific learning disabilities are currently identified. In addition, NDSD staff indicated a need for continued skill development in integrated assessment report writing and further training on the process for the identification of students with a variety of additional disabilities.

Although NDDPI monitors did not identify concerns with incomplete Integrated Written Assessment or identification of students with additional disabilities as findings, it will benefit special education personnel to participate in ongoing training in these areas.

III. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

An IEP team, which includes the child's teacher, the child's parent(s), an administrator, and a special education teacher, must develop an educational program tailored to meet the child's unique needs.

Summary information included in the NDSD Self-Assessment report indicated the lack of full team participation in the development of the IEP as an area of concern. Specifically noted was the lack of a general educator and/or the LEA or SEU representative in attendance at the meeting. Many components of the IEP process have been impacted as a result of the reauthorization of IDEA. These include the following: measurable annual goals and short-term objectives; characteristics of services (link to general education curriculum); consideration of special factors; and documentation of extended school year services. The NDSD superintendent has assured NDDPI that state recommended *Guidelines: Individualized Education Program Planning Process (8/1/99)* were adopted by the unit and are being used by personnel at the NDSD. In addition, training was provided to NDSD personnel in the fall of 1999 on the reauthorization of IDEA, including changes in the IEP process.

As a result of the significant changes due to the reauthorization of IDEA, NDDPI monitors included questions relating to these changes as part of the Verification Review. Respondents were asked to describe the IEP development process, including specific questions related to present levels of educational performance, annual goals and short term instructional objectives, characteristics of services, consideration of special factors, and determination of the least restrictive environment (LRE). Respondents were also asked to “Describe how general education teachers are supported when students from NDSD are placed in the public school setting.”

Since the determination of need for and the provision of extended school year services is an issue for schools across North Dakota, and has also been identified as an area of concern by the federal monitors during their most recent visit, this issue was emphasized during interviews with school personnel. Student file reviews completed by NDDPI staff also included the IEP components indicated above as areas of concern, including documentation of the discussion of the need for extended school year services.

Participation in state and districtwide assessment or alternate assessment is a new requirement within the reauthorization. Since this is a new requirement, it was emphasized during interviews with NDSD school personnel and student file reviews.

Transition, which is a major part of the IEP process for students ages 14 and over, was identified by OSEP as a major emphasis within the reauthorization of IDEA. Specific areas of change include: community-based training; on-the-job training opportunities; availability of vocational courses in local schools; availability of vocational assessments; and independent living skill development. During interviews that NDDPI conducted within the Verification Review, specific questions regarding transition planning were included. Student file reviews completed by NDDPI monitors also included items based on transition changes as a result of the reauthorization of IDEA.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strengths, areas of noncompliance, and suggestions for improvement.

STRENGTHS

The process for developing the IEP is commendable. This computerized process involves a team effort whereby each member actively participates in developing an individualized plan that results in integrated services to the student.

Transition planning at NDSD is strong and effective. Transition was reflected in the development of the IEP and information found was well documented, accurate and showed a process of movement towards graduation and post school outcomes. Evidence of a strong team process was reflected in planning, discussion and specific activities to promote a seamless transition.

Resources are utilized effectively and good working relationships have been developed with Vocational Rehabilitation, LAVTC, Region 3 Transition Coordinator, School to Work program, Job Services and UND-LR.

Educators from NDSD, Devils Lake public schools, and Lake Region Special Services have a collaborative working relationship. NDSD works closely with the public schools to provide each student with appropriate LRE opportunities. General educators are provided with training opportunities to ensure successful inclusion of students who are deaf in the general education curriculum.

NDSD involves both family and community members in the development of their school improvement activities and continuous improvement planning. Parents and community members are invited to participate in the NCA School Improvement efforts.

AREAS OF NONCOMPLIANCE

1. IEP Team Membership and Participation

34 CFR 300.344 specifies persons who must attend the IEP meeting. Through interviews and review of student files, NDDPI monitors found that general education teachers and local special education unit directors do not regularly attend although they are invited and are provided with copies of the completed IEPs.

2. Measurable Annual Goals

34 CFR 300.347(a)(2) indicates that a statement of measurable annual goals must be included in the content of an IEP. Although NDDPI monitors found that NDSD educators were able to describe how annual goals were developed, student file reviews identified several goals that were judged as too broad to be attainable within one year.

3. Characteristics of Services

During interviews with NDDPI monitors, special education teachers were not able to accurately describe characteristics of services. In addition, student file reviews completed by NDDPI monitors verified that documentation was insufficient to clarify that discussions were held to determine how goals and objectives could be met in the general education setting. 34 CFR 300.347(a)(2) further states that IEPs must include short-term objectives related to how the child will be involved in and progress in the general curriculum. The characteristics of services discussion considers where and how the services will be delivered. This discussion also serves as an opportunity to consider whether goals and objectives can be met in the general education

setting and how the implementation of special instruction leads to inclusion in the general education curriculum.

4. Consideration of Special Factors (i.e., Positive Behavioral Supports, Behavior Plans).

34 CFR 300.13 requires that services be provided in accordance with an appropriate IEP. In addition, 34 CFR 300.346(2) states that the consideration of special factors must be addressed in order to provide free appropriate public education to children with disabilities. Through interviews with school personnel and student file reviews of IEPs, NDDPI monitors determined that Positive Behavioral Supports and Intervention Plans are not always considered and developed for students who demonstrate behavioral concerns. The NDSD Self-Assessment report indicated that documentation of special considerations in the IEP was sufficient, however a clear understanding of all special factors and documentation of these services may be the larger issue.

34 CFR 300.346(2) requires that an IEP team consider including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to meet the needs of a child whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others. Through interviews with school personnel, NDDPI verified the need for skill development of appropriate interventions and strategies used to meet the needs of students whose behavior impedes learning in the general education classroom. NDSD personnel interviewed stated that excellent consultation is provided but it is not always sufficient. They indicated that more responsibility for supporting students with behavioral and emotional needs would be accepted by personnel at NDSD if they received more training and skill development.

5. Extended School Year Services

34 CFR 300.300 requires that a free appropriate public education be made available to all children with disabilities. 34 CFR 300.13 requires that services be provided in accordance with an appropriate IEP. In addition, 34 CFR 300.309 states that extended school year services must be available as necessary in order to provide free appropriate public education to children with disabilities.

Through interviews with school personnel and student file reviews of IEPs, NDDPI monitors determined that extended school year services (ESY) are not always appropriately considered for all children with disabilities who need such services in order to receive a free appropriate public education. The NDSD Self-Assessment indicated that documentation in the ESY section of the IEP was sufficient, however a clear understanding of the required process for determination of ESY services may be the larger issue.

NDSD staff indicated through interviews that there may be a need for provision of ESY; however, as a residential facility, NDSD does not provide ESY services. It was reported that there is an agreement between the NDSD and the students' home school districts that the NDSD will assume the responsibility for development of each student's IEP. Since the NDSD does not provide ESY services for its students, it must ensure that the students' home districts are involved in the IEP planning process. If ESY services are determined to be necessary, the NDSD must assist the home district in planning appropriate ESY services and obtain documentation of those services when they have been provided. This communication will ensure continuation of

appropriate special education services when students move between their home districts and the School for the Deaf.

File reviews indicated a lack of documentation of the justification for the determination for the need for ESY services, the type and amount of services, the beginning and ending date of services, where the services will be provided, and the name of the service provider. It would be beneficial for staff at NDSD to receive training on the new *Guidelines: Extended School Year Services for Students with Disabilities* (April, 2000).

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Participation in state and district-wide assessment or alternate assessment is a new requirement within the reauthorization of IDEA. Through the self-assessment process, NDSD found that the percentage of students participating in statewide assessments was not consistent with statewide averages. Sixteen of the possible 24 students in grades 4, 6, 8, & 10 participated in the statewide assessment. In addition, NDSD staff indicated some confusion on who should be taking part in the statewide assessment and who should be taking part in the alternate assessment. It may be beneficial for staff at NDSD to receive inservice training on this portion of the new *Guidelines: The Special Education Process for North Dakota Schools*.

IV. LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities must be educated with their non-disabled peers. Placement decisions must be based on the goals and objectives in the child's IEP.

As reflected in the 1994 monitoring report, NDDPI found that NDSD did not ensure that: (1) children with disabilities were educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate; (2) various alternative placements were available to the extent necessary to implement each child's IEP; and (3) unless a student's IEP required some other arrangement, the student was educated in the school that he or she would attend if he or she did not have a disability.

The summary of information included in the NDSD Self-Assessment report did not indicate concerns regarding LRE. During interviews conducted by NDDPI monitors as part of the Verification Review, respondents were asked to "Describe the nature of collaborative efforts between general education teachers and special education teachers." Files were reviewed with regard to the options available and justification for the option chosen.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strengths, areas of strengths, noncompliance, and suggestions for improvement.

STRENGTHS

Clearly the greatest strength of NDSD is the student's opportunities for direct interaction with peers and educational personnel in the student's own language and communication mode (without needing an interpreter).

The NDSD has a communication department with five educational interpreters who are scheduled to provide interpreter services to students involved in the general education setting in the Devils Lake public school system. These support services are intended to maximize in-class instructional time for students with hearing impairments. In addition, NDSD provides training for general educators to promote techniques, which will assist in the inclusion of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the general education curriculum and setting.

AREA OF NONCOMPLIANCE

34 CFR 300.550(b) requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled and that the removal of children with disabilities from the general education environment may occur only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. In addition, 34 CFR 300.347 requires that the IEP include an explanation of the extent to which a child will not participate in the general education setting and curriculum.

The IEP must contain documentation of all options considered, why each was rejected, and why the option selected is the most appropriate and least restrictive for the child. Harmful effects of each option must also have been considered and documented. File reviews indicated severe limitations in the options available and documentation of options considered. Furthermore, file reviews indicated a lack of documentation regarding the reasons for rejecting certain options, justification of the options chosen, and the potential harmful effects of the chosen placement.

As the IEP is reviewed and revised, the team must carefully reconsider the characteristics of services and placement issues because a student's characteristics and needs are likely to change over time, as is a local education agency's capacity to deliver/support educational services. If the IEP team determines that NDSD is the most appropriate and least restrictive site for the delivery of these services, the local education agency (LEA) is still held responsible to ensure that the student may access educational program options as well as nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities with students who do not have a disability through the LEA in which the service facility is located. For this reason, it is imperative that continued communication with the student's home school district takes place. The student's IEP team must consider the extent to which the Devils Lake school district can carry out each objective in the least restrictive setting. An administrator of the student's resident school district (or the special education unit) must be involved in this discussion and decision. The NDSD Self-assessment report indicated a concern with the lack of LEA participation in the development of the IEP. In addition, interviews with staff and file reviews indicated a lack of LEA participation in the IEP process.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Although effective collaboration between NDSD personnel and public school teachers is not a regulatory requirement of IDEA, efforts to improve collaboration will certainly benefit all children, including children with disabilities. A common concern noted as a barrier to increased collaborative efforts within the public school was the "lack of time". Creative improvement planning strategies will be needed to address this issue. Both public school teachers and NDSD personnel interviewed indicated they would be interested in more team teaching efforts and

inservice training opportunities. Activities to be considered for improvement planning may include planning together, co-teaching, and team teaching.

V. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents have the right to have access to their child's educational records. Parental consent is required for initial evaluation, reevaluation, and placement. Parents must be included in IEP team decisions, and parents must be notified of their right to appeal.

The NDSD Self-Assessment report summarized information from parent surveys conducted as part of the school improvement process. In general, parents express comfort with their personal level of involvement in educational programs in which their children participate. NDSD personnel believe that families are involved, however, it is not always evident that families are "fully" involved. Some families tend to view the school personnel as the "experts" and prefer to leave educational decision-making to the professionals. It was noted in the Self-Assessment report that school district personnel agree that continued efforts are needed to help all families feel welcomed and involved in education programs for their children.

During interviews conducted by NDDPI monitors, NDSD personnel were asked to "Describe the extent to which parents are involved in evaluation and IEP meetings." Documentation of this involvement was also included in student file reviews completed by NDDPI.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strength, area of noncompliance, and suggestions for improvement.

STRENGTH

Positive feedback from parents and families indicates a level of satisfaction with school services. Parents attend IEP meetings and are comfortable with their own level of involvement.

AREA OF NONCOMPLIANCE

NDDPI monitors noted a lack of parent participation and input during review of student evaluation plans and IWARs. File reviews indicated a lack of documentation of parent input in the evaluation planning process and in the development of integrated written assessment reports.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

Appropriate procedural safeguards are in place and interviews with school personnel indicated that parents consistently attend IEP meetings, however, there are differing levels of actual participation and decision-making. NDDPI strongly encourages the NDSD to continue to offer information and training opportunities to families of children with disabilities. Parental involvement has long been recognized as an important indicator of a school's success and parent involvement has positive effects on children's attitudes and behavior. Partnerships positively impact achievement, improve parents' attitudes toward the school, and benefit school personnel as well.

VI. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

Procedural safeguards, which ensure the fairness of educational decisions, include impartial due process hearings; the right to an independent educational evaluation; written notification to parents explaining their rights; parental consent; and appointment of surrogate parents, when needed.

As reflected in the 1994 monitoring report, NDDPI found that NDSD did not meet its responsibility to ensure careful documentation of procedural safeguards (i.e., prior notice, consent for evaluation and placement). Significant improvement has occurred in this area.

Information included in the NDSD Self-Assessment report indicated that student records are managed with regard to content, maintenance, security, and disclosure. However, it was noted that staff did not always consistently complete record inspection forms.

During the Verification Review process, NDDPI monitors found evidence that the provision of procedural safeguards, including student records management, is an area of strength for NDSD. No evidence was found to verify the self-assessment finding of inconsistent completion of record inspection forms.

NDDPI reviewed and analyzed the data and identified the following strength.

STRENGTH

The provision of procedural safeguards is an area of strength for NDSD. In addition, parent survey results indicated an awareness of their rights.

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